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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 017493

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS ACTIVIST YAO LIFA COMPLAINS OF INCREASED
GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT

REF: A. BEIJING 15796

[1](#)B. BEIJING 17245

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL INTERNAL UNIT CHIEF SUSAN THORNTON.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) GRASS-ROOTS ELECTIONS ACTIVIST YAO LIFA (PROTECT) DESCRIBED TO POLOFF ON AUGUST 21 THE INCREASED HARASSMENT THAT ELECTION AND OTHER ACTIVISTS ARE FACING ACROSS CHINA. THE CCP IS FEELING THREATENED, YAO CLAIMED, BY THE LINKS ACTIVISTS IN A NUMBER OF FIELDS HAVE ESTABLISHED NATIONWIDE VIA THE INTERNET AND OTHER MEANS AND HAS THEREFORE BEGUN INCREASING PRESSURE BY FOLLOWING, HARASSING, AND DETAINING THEM. THE PARTY HAS ALSO REPORTEDLY ISSUED GUIDELINES TO RESTRICT MEDIA COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS. YAO ENDED WITH A DIATRIBE AGAINST THE PARTY, SAYING ALL ELECTIONS IN CHINA ARE A "SHAM." WHILE YAO'S COMMENTS CLEARLY REFLECT HIS FRUSTRATION WITH INCREASED OFFICIAL HARASSMENT, ANOTHER CHINESE ELECTIONS ACTIVIST SYMPATHETIC TO YAO'S GOALS SEPARATELY TOLD POLOFF ON AUGUST 22 THAT YAO'S TROUBLES STEM FROM HIS OPENLY STATED INTENTION TO BRING DOWN THE PARTY. END SUMMARY.

HARASSMENT OF ELECTION ACTIVISTS

[1](#)2. (C) HUBEI GRASS-ROOTS ELECTIONS ACTIVIST YAO LIFA (PROTECT) MET WITH POLOFF ON AUGUST 21 TO RECOUNT THE INCREASED HARASSMENT HE SAYS ELECTION AND OTHER ACTIVISTS ARE FACING ACROSS CHINA. (NOTE: COUNTRY-WIDE POPULAR ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL LEGISLATURES AT THE COUNTY LEVEL AND BELOW WILL TAKE PLACE ON A ROLLING BASIS BETWEEN OCTOBER 2006 AND THE END OF 2007. GUANGDONG (OCTOBER), BEIJING (NOVEMBER) AND HUBEI (DECEMBER) ARE AMONG THE FIRST LOCALITIES TO SCHEDULE THEIR ELECTION ROUNDS. EN NOTE.) YAO BEGAN BY DESCRIBING HIS DETENTIO, ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHER ELECTION ACTIVISTS, ON JULY 26 IN HUBEI FOR HOLDING AN "ILLEGAL MEETING" (SEE REF A). IN REALITY, HE SAID, THERE IS NO CHINESE LAW ON "ILLEGAL MEETINGS"; HE AND LIKE-MINDED ACTIVISTS WERE MERELY HAVING LUNCH WHEN THEY WERE DETAINED. YAO WAS RELEASED AFTER SIX HOURS, OTHERS WERE HELD FOR AS LONG AS 24 HOURS.

[1](#)3. (C) THE REASON FOR THE DETENTIONS APPEARS TO BE AN ATTEMPT BY LOCAL OFFICIALS TO DISRUPT YAO'S PLANS FOR HOLDING A MEETING IN WUHAN, HUBEI, ON AUGUST 27 TO DISCUSS UPCOMING LOCAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS ELECTIONS. SECURITY OFFICIALS APPARENTLY LEARNED OF THE MEETING BY INTERCEPTING PARTICIPANTS' CELL PHONE TEXT MESSAGES AND HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY BEGUN HARASSING THEM, YAO STATED. YAO REFERRED TO THE EXAMPLE OF PROFESSOR AI SHAOMING OF ZHONGSHAN DAXUE IN GUANGZHOU, A PLANNED PARTICIPANT IN THE AUGUST 27 MEETING. RECENTLY PROFESSOR AI HAS BEEN HARASSED AND WARNED BY THE HEAD OF HER WORK UNIT NOT TO ATTEND. YAO SAID HIS EMPLOYER

(A MIDDLE SCHOOL) HAS STARTED TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON HIM AS WELL. HE RECENTLY NOTICED SOMEONE FROM HIS SCHOOL FOLLOWING HIM AND SPECULATED THAT HIS ACTIVITIES ARE BEING REPORTED TO LOCAL SECURITY OFFICIALS.

PRESS RESTRICTIONS ON ELECTIONS COVERAGE

14. (C) NEW DIRECTIVES RESTRICTING PRESS COVERAGE OF LOCAL ELECTIONS ARE AIMED AT DISRUPTING ACTIVISTS' EFFORTS, YAO CLAIMED. PREVIOUSLY, A NUMBER OF CHINESE NEWSPAPERS, AND EVEN OFFICIALS FROM THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (NPC), HAD TRAVELED TO HUBEI TO INTERVIEW YAO AND SURVEY HIS EFFORTS TO PROMOTE COMPETITIVE PEOPLE'S CONGRESS ELECTIONS. MORE RECENTLY, HOWEVER, YAO'S PRESS CONTACTS TOLD HIM THAT THE PARTY PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT HAS ISSUED GUIDANCE STATING THAT ONLY THE OFFICIAL XINHUA NEWS AGENCY SHOULD COVER THE DETAILS OF LOCAL ELECTIONS; OTHER PAPERS ARE MERELY TO RUN XINHUA'S STORIES. HE SAID A "RECENT" NANFANG ZHOUMOU PIECE ON ELECTIONS IS AN EXAMPLE. THE PIECE, ACCORDING TO YAO, REPORTS THE RESULTS OF A GENERAL SURVEY OF NPC MEMBERS ON ELECTIONS, BUT STEERS CLEAR OF TALKING TO ANY CANDIDATES OR MENTIONING THE WORK OF THOSE PROMOTING COMPETITIVE ELECTIONS.

15. (C) ACCORDING TO YAO, THE CCP FEELS THREATENED BY THE GROWING NUMBER OF ACTIVISTS WHO HAVE ESTABLISHED LINKS VIA THE INTERNET AND OTHER MEANS. YAO STRESSED THAT THIS IS TAKING PLACE NATIONWIDE AND IS NOT LIMITED TO HUBEI, NOR IS IT LIMITED TO ELECTION ACTIVISTS. YAO SAID THAT THOSE MEETING ON JULY 26 WERE ASSOCIATED WITH A MOVEMENT CALLED THE "CHINA PAN-BLUE ALLIANCE" WHICH CLAIMS THE MANTLE OF THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY KMT PARTY AND ADVOCATES ADHERENCE TO SUN YAT-SEN'S THREE PEOPLE'S PRINCIPLES. ANOTHER ELECTIONS ACTIVIST, XIONG WEI, SEPARATELY STATED THAT THE PAN-BLUE

ALLIANCE CLAIMS SEVERAL THOUSAND MEMBERS. THOSE TARGETED FOR HARASSMENT ALSO INCLUDE ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHTS OF AIDS PATIENTS, RURAL LABORERS, AND HOMEOWNERS WHOSE LAND HAS BEEN CONFISCATED BY DEVELOPERS, YAO SAID. YAO POINTED TO THE DETENTION OF XU ZHIYONG, ONE OF CHEN GUANGCHENG'S LAWYERS, AS ONE RECENT EXAMPLE (SEE REF B).

ELECTIONS IN CHINA ARE A "SHAM"

16. (C) YAO PROVIDED POLOFF WITH COPIES OF TWO BROCHURES HE HAS WRITTEN DESIGNED TO EDUCATE CHINESE CITIZENS ON THEIR ELECTION RIGHTS UNDER CHINA'S CONSTITUTION AND RELEVANT LAWS. ONE PAMPHLET IS ENTITLED, "THE ESSENTIALS OF CHINA'S GRASSROOTS PEOPLES CONGRESS ELECTIONS, 2006-2007," PREPARED BY THE "CHINESE PEOPLES CONGRESS ELECTION STUDY GROUP," ISSUED IN BEIJING ON APRIL 12, 2006. THE OTHER IS CALLED, "FIGHTING FOR YOUR RIGHTS, 2006, HUBEI." YAO SAID HE IS DISTRIBUTING THE PAMPHLETS TO CANDIDATES, THEIR SUPPORTERS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. BOTH DOCUMENTS CLEARLY LIST HIS NAME AND CELL PHONE NUMBER.

17. (C) AFTER EXPLAINING THE BROCHURES, YAO LAUNCHED INTO A DIATRIBE AGAINST THE CCP, SAYING THAT ALL ELECTIONS IN CHINA -- BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE PARTY -- ARE A "SHAM." CHINESE ELECTION LAWS ARE TOO BRIEF AND VAGUE, HE SAID. IN ADDITION, THEY NEITHER CONTAIN PROVISIONS FOR PROTECTING PEOPLE'S ELECTION RIGHTS, NOR PROVIDE RECOURSE WHEN THOSE RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED. THE CCP CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS, YAO DECLARED, THAT IT WOULD LOSE ANY TRULY FAIR ELECTION -- HENCE ITS CONCERN ABOUT ACTIVISTS. YAO ALSO DISMISSED THE POSSIBILITY OF INNER-PARTY DEMOCRACY. OUT OF 70 MILLION CCP MEMBERS, HE CLAIMED, ONLY ABOUT ONE-TENTH ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM THEIR MEMBERSHIP. THEREFORE, YAO PREDICTED, A TRULY DEMOCRATIC INNER-PARTY ELECTION WOULD ONLY THREATEN THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP.

COMMENT

18. (C) YAO'S DESCRIPTION OF NEW RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVISTS ACROSS CHINA TRACKS WITH THE WIDELY REPORTED TIGHTENING ON NGOS, THE PRESS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS OVER THE LAST YEAR. MANY GRASS ROOTS ACTIVISTS STEER CLEAR OF YAO, HOWEVER, VIEWING HIM AS TOO RADICAL. FORMER LEGAL DAILY JOURNALIST AND LEGAL ACTIVIST XIONG WEI (PROTECT) SEPARATELY COMMENTED THAT YAO'S DIFFICULTIES, OF WHICH HE WAS WELL AWARE, STEM AT LEAST IN PART FROM HIS PUBLICLY STATED GOAL OF USING LEGAL MEANS TO BRING DOWN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST SYSTEM. WHILE SYMPATHETIC TO YAO'S GOALS, XIONG SAID HE FELT YAO NEEDLESSLY IRRITATES CCP OFFICIALS WITH HIS CONFRONTATIONAL RHETORIC.
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